

Hurting the Asbestos Victims

In the last **Keelie** we mentioned the nightmare situation facing thousands of asbestos victims and their families. Remember the figures: of those who entered the **Clydeside Action on Asbestos** office alone during the past year, a staggering 300 are now dead, killed by this obscene industrial disease. Now the latest news breaks in the 'quality' press. The Tory Government of this country ~~are deciding whether or not they should~~ reimburse the Lloyds 'name' underwriters who are being forced to settle the legitimate claims of asbestos victims.

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Imagine the Tories baling out the bookies with the punters' money because they had one bad day at Ascot. The other 364 were okay, the profits as massive as usual, but on this one day of the year a few of the punters knocked it off. That sums up the situation.

The vast proportion of claims are from overseas clients, the U.S.A. in particular. This is because justice exists for U.S.A. victims in a way that it doesn't in Scotland. How could it when some of the 'names' associated with the world's biggest insurance bookies are members of the National Government!

One of the 62 Tory MP's named in the Lloyds scandal is Ian Lang. As Scottish Secretary of State he is the man at the top, the highest authority in the land. His is the last court of refuge for asbestos victims and their families. But what chance have you got in any court where the judge is one of the very people who gains financially by denying your claim? It's an obscene situation for any country calling itself 'democratic'..

Every single institution in this country is geared to stop asbestos victims receiving justice. From the medical profession to the legal profession, from the DHSS to the political process itself. Money talks. Remember that enormous slush fund set up by the elite few who make the massive profits, including the £13.5 million donated by the Duke of Westminster last year. This family of aristocrats is among the biggest shareholders in the asbestos industry in the world.

Such people profit from the dead and suffering. Their incredible prestige, power and influence is what the victims of asbestos-related diseases are up against in their fight for justice. And apart from self-help organisations like **Clydeside Action** they are forced to fight alone. The part played by the Labour Party and trades union hierarchy is quite simply disgusting and it's no great surprise to hear lawyer Paul Boateng, Labour's Shadow Treasury spokesman, crying that 'we must bale out the bookies'. Instead of fighting on behalf of the victims of industrial disease the Labour leadership ~~fight~~ fight for those who dirty their hands in profiting by it. Asbestos is a cancer on society. So too is greed.

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